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MEDICAL LIBRARY

NLM CONTRACTS WITH UCLA FOR PILOT STUDY TO DECENTRALIZE MEDLARS

Dr. Martin M. Cummings, Director of the National Library of Medicine, has announced the award of a $125,000 contract to the University of California at Los Angeles for a pilot study for decentralizing MEDLARS, the Library's computer-based information storage and retrieval system.

MEDLARS (meaning Medical Literature Analysis and Retrieval System) is an application of computer technology to the task of maintaining access to the world's scientific literature in the fields of medicine and related biological sciences. In relation to its mission of collecting the literature, the Library uses MEDLARS to produce the monthly Index Medicus, a comprehensive reference listing of journal articles. MEDLARS is also used to compile recurring bibliographies in more specialized subject areas and to conduct searches of the literature in answer to specific requests from scientists, practitioners, and educators.

The concept of decentralizing MEDLARS to permit the use of NLM computer tapes by medical library centers outside the Washington area was part of the original planning and systems design.

Commenting on the significance of the new contract, Dr. Cummings said, "The decentralization of MEDLARS is a logical and necessary development to enable the system to help meet the mounting demands of the biomedical community for current medical information in the face of the explosive growth of the scientific literature itself."

The UCLA Biomedical Library, one of the largest medical libraries in the country, was chosen for study purposes as the first of a proposed network of geographically dispersed MEDLARS search centers. Such a network would extend MEDLARS' retrieval capacity throughout the United States.

Under the terms of the contract, the NLM will provide the UCLA Biomedical Library with duplicates of the MEDLARS magnetic tapes on which the literature references are stored. Each reel of tape, roughly 12 inches in diameter,

holds some 35,000 bibliographic citations. The California search center will reprogram the MEDLARS tapes in COBOL (Common Business Oriented Language) for use on a local computer. Thus converted, the stored information can be made available to individual scientists and research institutions in the surrounding geographic area.

By means of the UCLA pilot project, the NLM will develop data and experience relating to computer reprogramming and tape conversion, program maintenance problems, cost factors, user evaluation, and training requirements for searchers, systems analysts, programmers, and administrative personnel required to operate remote MEDLARS centers.

UCLA will report periodically on its operation to the NLM Project Officer, Mr. Charles J. Austin, Chief of the NLM Data Processing Division. The Project Officers at UCLA are Miss Louise Darling, Biomedical Librarian, and Dr. Wilfred Dixon, Director of the Health Sciences Computer Center.

WASHINGTON AREA MEDICAL LIBRARIANS MEET IN JANUARY

The Washington, D.C. Area Medical Library Group will hold its annual meeting on Friday, January 29, at the National Institutes of Health in Bethesda, Maryland. The group will meet in Wilson Hall on the third floor of the NIH Administration Building.

The meeting is sponsored by the National Institutes of Health Library. Mr. Jess A. Martin, Chief of the Library Branch, NIH, will serve as Chairman. Members of the Board of Directors of the Medical Library Association, conferring in Washington at that time, have been invited to attend the NIH meeting.

The program will open in the afternoon with a presentation on the development of the NIH Library.

Dr. Martin M. Cummings, Director of the National Library of Medicine, will describe the policies and programs of the NLM.

Mr. Alfred Brandon, Librarian of the Welch Memorial Library, Johns Hopkins University School of Medicine, will moderate a Panel on Medical Library Internship. Panelists will include Miss Louise Darling, Librarian of the Biomedical Library, University of California at Los Angeles; and Mrs. Maxine Hanke, Staff Assistant for Library Resources and Facilities, NLM, and Chairman of the MLA Subcommittee on Medical Internship.

Dr. Richard H. Orr, Director of the Institute for Advancement of Medical Communications, will be the principal speaker at the dinner meeting. He will discuss "The Role of Libraries in the Communication System of Biomedical Research."

Further information may be obtained from Miss Anna E. Dougherty, National Institutes of Health Library, Bldg. 10, Room 5-N-118, Bethesda, Md. 20014. Phone: 49-64541.

MARY CORNING TO REPRESENT NLM ON NAS-NRC'S FID COMMITTEE

Miss Mary E. Corning, Chief of the Library's Publications and Translations Division, has been appointed NLM representative on the National Academy of Sciences-National Research Council's U.S. National Committee for the International Federation for Documentation (FID).

BRITISH BOOK LEAGUE BEGINS STUDY OF MEDICAL LIBRARY SERVICES

In the belief that a good library is central to any educational activity, the National Book League of Britain has undertaken a three-year study of library services for medical education, including post-graduate training of practitioners, in the United Kingdom.

The National Book League is an independent education charity whose purpose is to encourage the provision of adequate library services for all sectors of Britain's reading public. To accomplish its objectives, the League has established a special research department to determine the causes and possible remedies for inadequate library resources and facilities in various educational disciplines.

As the result of a preliminary survey of books and journals used by the nursing profession, the League has received support for a detailed study of library resources available for medical education in general. A team of specialists, including bibliographers, sociologists, and other skilled professionals, will conduct the research. They will collect information by means of questionnaires, interviews, correspondence, and visits to representative institutions. In addition, they will draw upon the League's specialized knowledge in the field of library acquisitions.

To help overcome the problem of rapid obsolescence of scientific and medical knowledge, the study team also intends to provide an analysis of journal circulation, abstracting, and indexing.

The study will encompass the administration and staffing of medical libraries, their financial resources, their expenditures for library materials, their size, and scope of services. After determining what the actual needs are, the League will establish expert standards for book stock, journal requirements, library space, equipment, and facilities, based on the best current practice in medical and nursing institutions in the United Kingdom.

In carrying out this study and related activities, the League hopes to persuade, guide, and advise the professions, particularly those medical administrators and practitioners who are unskilled in library matters. Ultimate responsibility for the selection of library materials would remain with the medical and educational services.

Results of the study will be published in special reports and other materials for the medical and lay press. The League will also make recommendations and provide advice to individual institutions upon request. Particular attention will be given to hospital libraries in connection with the British Ministry of Health's plan to reorganize and develop medical care facilities throughout the United Kingdom over a ten-year period.

DELEGATION FROM AAMC VISITS LIBRARY

The Association of American Medical Colleges' Committee on Federal Health Programs visited the Library in November. The Committee heard a detailed discussion of the projected NLM Extramural Program of assistance to medical libraries.

After touring the Data Processing Division and observing a demonstration of MEDLARS (Medical Literature Analysis and Retrieval System), the AAMC Committee indicated its interest in a recurring bibliography on medical education which could be published periodically as a supplement to the Journal of Medical Education.

DEMAND BIBLIOGRAPHIES PRODUCED BY MEDLARS

Following is a continuation of the lists of experimental demand searches of the biomedical literature produced by the Library's MEDLARS system. Since the requesters usually specify limitations in terms of subject matter, language, time, or other considerations, the bibliographies do not warrant wide dissemination and are, therefore, not available for distribution. They have been selected merely to give the scientific community an idea of the diversified subject areas covered by MEDLARS.

SUBJECTS

Virus- and drug-induced abnormalities

Tests and behaviors for schizophrenics and neurotics

Smoking and health

Tissue culture in protozoa and helminths

Chemotherapy and immunology of schistosomiasis

Pleural fluid lipid content or pleural fluid antibodies

Clearance by ciliary action of foreign bodies from respiratory tract

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